

The Panel, at its meeting in March 1996, completed an extensive review of the current draft of the FGDC Vegetation Classification and Information Standards. The Panel's main contribution was to provide outside review and detailed editorial comments on the FGDC Report. Phase I of the Panel's work concluded with its recommendations to the FGDC. The panel then moved into its second phase by developing a document to address areas of interest to ecologists which remained unaddressed in the FGDC forum. Phase II focuses on developing floristic-level standards and a taxonomic unit review process. The Panel began work on "An Initiative for a Standard Classification of Vegetation for the United States" describing a process to establish a scientifically rigorous system to develop and review taxonomic units at the floristic levels of the current FGDC standards.

Studies on Ecosystem Management

Several ecosystem management activities aimed at bringing multiple perspectives to decision-making processes at many levels have been undertaken. These include:

- A series of Conversations on Ecosystem Management brought together stakeholders from all segments of society to address challenges confronting an ecosystem-based approach to the management of natural resources. Three conversations have taken place, the first focusing on incorporating local values into ecosystem management, the second exploring the roles of the small business community in ecosystem management, and the third concentrating on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its role in ecosystem management.
- A symposium titled "Ecology and the Social Sciences" was organized for the 1995 ESA Annual Meeting. During the symposium, speakers engaged each other and the audience in discussion on philosophical, economic, sociological, legal, and institutional issues related to natural resource management, with a special focus on ecosystem management. An article summarizing the symposium was published in the *ESA Bulletin* in April 1996.
- The August 1996 issue of *Ecological Applications* was devoted the topic of ecosystem management. The issue contained a report on the scientific basis for ecosystem management, as well as a forum entitled "Perspectives on Ecosystem Management," which featured 20 papers by authors from diverse disciplines.